DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 089 174 CG 008 776

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TITLE	Trends in University Student Attitudes and Behavior Toward Drugs.
INSTITUTION	Maryland Univ., College Park. Counseling Center.
REPORT NO	RR-16-73
PUB DATE	73
NOTE	19p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*Behavioral Science Research; *College Students; *Drug Abuse; Questionnaires; *Student Attitudes; *Student Behavior

ABSTRACT

Trends in student attitudes and behavior toward drug use were investigated through administration of two anonymous polls to University of Maryland freshmen during summer, 1971 (N = 538) and summer, 1972 (N = 761). Both polls were designed to investigate the incidence and frequency of drug use among incoming students, as well as students' reasons for using and not using drugs, their attitudes toward drug legalization, the illegal sale and use of drugs, and the University's role in providing drug related services. Results indicated a fairly stable, although slightly increasing, trend in the incidence and frequency of drug use. Although marijuana was the only drug to evidence a significant increase of use, all drugs except hashish, mescaline, and DMT, tended to be used more frequently. Only LSD and DMT were shown to have been used by a smaller percentage of people. A substantial portion of the incoming students have tried alcohol in at least one form (90%). The correlation between use of marijuana and hashish and use of heroin was found to be low. With the exception of cigarettes, more men than women use drugs. Students' reasons for using and not using drugs were not found to change substantially. Students from the later poll showed significantly greater agreement on the legalization of marijuana, on NOT attending a campus drug education program, and on going to the University Counseling Center if they felt a need for drug counseling. (Author)

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SUMMARY

Trends in student attitudes and behavior toward drug use were investigated through administration of two anonymous polls to University of Maryland freshmen during summer, 1971 (N = 538) and summer, 1972 (N = 761). Both polls were designed to investigate the incidence and frequency of drug use among incoming students, as well as students' reasons for using and not using drugs, their attitudes toward drug legalization, the illegal sale and use of drugs, and the University's role in providing drug related services.

Results indicated a fairly stable, although slightly increasing, trend in the incidence and frequency of drug use. Although marijuana was the only drug to evidence a significant increase of use, all drugs except hashish, mescaline, and DMT, tended to be used more frequently. Only LSD and DMT were shown to have been used by a smaller percentage of people. A substantial portion of the incoming students have tried alcohol in at least one form (90%). The correlation between use of marijuana and hashish and use of heroin was found to be low. With the exception of cigarettes, more men than women use drugs.

Students' reasons for using and not using drugs were not found to change substantially. Students from the later poll showed significantly greater agreement on the legalization of marijuana, on NOT attending a campus drug education program, and on going to the University Counseling Center if they felt a need for drug counseling.

Ever since the social phenomenon of drug use lost its ghetto identity and became a generally accepted fact of American life, there has been a proliferation of research into the problem. The more recent research, which has focused primarily on the incidence of use for particular drugs (e.g., marijuana, LSD, heroin, etc.) in particular populations (e.g., college students, high school students, etc.) has been reviewed in recent studies by Horowitz and Sedlacek (1972, 1973).

Although the literature is quite recent, the peculiar aspects of the "drug phenomenon" indicate a need for its continued investigation. One particular aspect, the changing nature of the American drug scene, has been discussed by Fort (1972). As evidence of this purported flux, Fort notes a current trend among campus drug users toward a greater use of alcohol. If, in fact, the trends in drug use are as volatile as Fort indicates, the implications for drug-related services and programs are indeed significant. If these services and programs are to reflect current trends in drug use and minister to the needs that arise out of these trends, on-going programs of research will be essential. The present study will examine trends in student attitudes and behavior toward drugs over a twelve month period.

The specific purpose of this study was to follow-up a previous investigation of University of Maryland students' attitudes and behavior toward drug use (Horowitz and Sedlacek, 1973). The earlier study polled a sample of the entire undergraduate student community in regard to the incidence and frequency of use of eight illegal and/or prescription drugs. The current follow-up study, which was limited to the following year's incoming freshmen, added to the original study one prescription drug and four legally and culturally "sanctioned" drugs. For purposes of both studies, incidence was defined as the percentage of people who reported ever having used a specific drug and frequency was defined as the number of times the respondent had ever used the specific drug. In addition, reasons for refraining from use, and maintaining use of drugs were explored. And finally, attitudes toward legalization of drugs, users, sellers, and drug-related services were investigated.

Method

Instruments

Both the initial and follow-up studies were conducted through the use of anonymous polls. The initial poll examined the extent of usage for eight drugs: marijuana, hashish, speed, mescaline, LSD, DMT, cocaine, and heroin. The follow-up poll added five more drugs to this list: downs, beer, wine, hard liquor, and cigarettes. For each drug, students were asked whether they had used the drug, and if so, how often. The addition of the five drugs to the latter poll was intended to examine the current drug scene in a fuller context. Questions on reasons for use and nonuse, and attitude items, were identical for the two polls. Although both polls were anonymous, students were asked to indicate their sex, place of residence, class, and family income.

Subjects

The 1971-72 poll was administered to incoming freshmen and returning students at the University of Maryland, College Park, during summer and fall registration, 1971. Of the 2,288 students sampled in this poll, only the freshmen (N = 538) who registered during the summer were used for comparative purposes. This was done to provide the best possible match between subject groups. The 1972-73 poll was administered to incoming freshmen students (N = 761) at the University of Maryland, College Park, during summer registration, 1972. Subjects in both polls were fairly evenly divided by sex and had an approximately equal chance of being asked to complete either a poll on drugs or one of five other topics.

Procedure

Due to incomplete responses, data on 49 students from the 1971-72 poll and 45 students from the 1972-73 poll were not used. The final usable N for the 1971-72 poll was 489: 239 males (49%) and 250 females (51%); for the 1972-73 poll it was 716: 358 males (50%) and 358 females (50%). Due to incomplete data neither the N's nor the percentages sum perfectly. The samples are clearly representative of incoming freshman students only.

Data Analyses

Data were analyzed by frequency and percent response by sex and year of poll administration. Comparisons of frequencies of use for each drug and attitudes were compared by year and by sex using X^2 and F. Additionally, intercorrelations between family income, frequency of use of each drug, and attitudes were performed on the data from the 1972-73 poll using Pearson correlation. And finally, reasons for use, nonuse, and cessation of use of drugs were compared by year using a Mann-Whitney U test. All differences reported are significant beyond the .05 level.

Results

Incidence of Use

Table 1 presents the incidence of use for the eight drugs from the 1971-72 poll and the thirteen drugs from the 1972-73 poll. The data indicate that fewer than half of the students from both samples have ever used any of the illicit drugs mentioned. The single most interesting difference between the two polls is the incidence of use for marijuana and hashish. In the 1972-73 poll marijuana evidenced a 6% increase in incidence (47% as compared to 41%) and hashish evidenced a 4% increase (34% as compared to 30%). In nearly every other respect, however, the two samples appeared almost identical; this is statistically supported by a X^2 test performed on the two samples, which indicated no overall significant differences. For both samples, marijuana and hashish are shown to be used by the largest number of people, followed by speed and downs, then psychedelic substances (mescaline, LSD, DMT), and finally the opiates (cocaine and heroin). Although the five drug categories added to the 1972-73 poll are not available for comparison, they provide interesting data and a broader context for the interpretation of current trends in campus drug use. With the addition

of these categories it becomes necessary to make a distinction between legally sanctioned substances (i.e., beer, wine, liquor, and cigarettes) and illicit and/or prescription drugs (illicit: marijuana, hashish, LSD, DMT, mescaline, cocaine, and heroin; presciption: amphetamines and downs). The logic of this dichotomy is evidenced in Table 1. The much higher incidence of use for alcoholic beverages and cigarettes indicates that the differences between these substances and the illicit/prescription drugs are more than chemical and legal; there is a difference in the way students behave toward these drugs as well.

Table 2, which presents the incidence of usage for both polls by sex, indicates that men use drugs more than do women. The single exception to this appeared in the 1972-73 poll, which indicated a slightly greater incidence of cigarette use for females.

Frequency of Use

Turning to the frequency of drug use, several interesting findings come into view. The data indicate that, of the illicit/prescription drugs in the two samples, marijuana and hashish have not only been tried by more people, but are also used more frequently by more people. The modal frequencies for marijuana and hashish users were "a few times" and "more than twice a week" while the modal responses for users of the other six drugs were "a few times" and "once". In the 1972-73 poll an interesting parallel to the frequency of marijuana and hashish use is found in the frequency with which alcohol is used. The modal responses for beer and liquor were "a few times" and "more than twice a week"; those for wine were "a few times" and "once a month". As might be expected, the predominance of cigarette smokers use that drug "more than twice a week". From these frequencies it can be concluded that, in terms of the frequency of their use, marijuana and hashish are treated more similarly to alcohol and cigarettes than are the other illegal/prescription drugs.

Although there appeared to be a mild trend towards more frequent drug use in the 1972-73 poll, a one-way analysis of variance of the differences between polls indicated a significantly greater frequency of use for marijuana alone. Interestingly, when the differences between years were analyzed by sex, the males used marijuana significantly more often in 1972-73, while the females did not. Sex then appears as a significant variable in the changing trends in drug use.

Reasons for Use and Non-Use

Tables 3 and 4 present rankings of the most frequently given reasons for use and non-use of drugs. A comparison of the two polls once again indicates a marked similarity between the two samples. For both polls the most prevalent reason for non-use of drugs was "no desire to experience its effects"; second was "reports of harmful psychological effects", and third was "illegality". The most frequently cited reason for the use of drugs was also the same for both samples, "to get high, feel good". There was, however, a difference in the second most frequently given reason; in the 1971-72 poll it was "to experience things more vividly" while in the 1972-73 poll it was "to be more friendly, enhance sociability, and/or be

more loving". However, the women in the 1972-73 poll deviated from this, selecting "relieve general anxiety, tension, nervousness and/or irritability" second most often. A comparison of the ranks given for reasons for use and non-use in the two polls (by Mann-Whitney U) did not yield statistically significant differences.

Attitudes

Table 5 presents means and standard deviations for each of the 15 attitudinal items for both the 1971-72 and 1972-73 polls. Students sampled in the 1971-72 poll most strongly agreed that a drug counseling service should be provided and funded by student government, while those sampled in the 1972-73 poll most strongly agreed that they would go to the University Counseling Center if they felt a need for drug counseling. Students in both polls were most strongly opposed to the carte blanche legalization of all drugs and to personally reporting someone for use of marijuana. Responses to questions on sellers and users tended to differentiate the students along three dimensions: using vs. selling, marijuana vs. other drugs, and self vs. university. Results indicated that students take a firmer stand on other drugs than on marijuana, that they take a firmer stand on selling than on using, and that they are more likely to agree that the university should turn someone in than agree that they themselves would turn someone in.

A comparison of the two polls by a one-way analysis of variance indicated significantly greater agreement by the 1972-73 poll respondents on three separate attitude items: greater agreement that marijuana should be legalized, greater agreement to NOT attend a drug education program on campus, and greater agreement to going to the University Counseling Center if they felt a need for drug counseling. Analysis of these differences by sex indicated that females in the 1972-73 poll also more strongly agreed that if the University has knowledge of a student selling drugs other than marijuana they should turn him over to the proper authorities. Males, on the other hand, showed significantly greater agreement on the legalization of marijuana alone.

Intercorrelations

The intercorrelation data from the 1972-73 polls indicates that income has apparently little to do with either attitude or behavior toward drugs. Interestingly, the one significant relationship that income did have was a positive correlation with wine use. The intercorrelations between different drugs were an entirely different matter in that nearly all were significant and positive. Some of the more striking significant correlations are as follows: marijuana correlated highest with hashish and least with heroin; LSD, while having fairly high correlations with all drugs, correlated highest with heroin; heroin correlated highest with LSD; speed correlated highest with downs, while downs correlated highest with hashish and second highest with speed; beer and wine correlated significantly with all drugs except heroin; wine, liquor, and beer all had higher correlations with downs than with any drugs other than marijuana and hashish; cigarette smoking correlated highest with marijuana and hashish and then wine, liquor, and beer.

Focusing on the attitude items, there were very high positive intercorrelations between itmes which referred to the reporting of individuals for using and selling drugs (items 10, 11, 12, 13 and 18, 19, 20, 21). High positive intercorrelations were also found among the items which supported personal reporting of someone for the use of marijuana and the university's reporting of someone for the use of or sale of drugs other than marijuana (items 11, 18, 20). Not surprisingly, there was a high positive correlation between use of marijuana and support for its legalization (item 7) and high negative correlations between marijuana use and support for the reporting of individuals selling marijuana (items 11 and 19). There was also a high negative correlation between the use of speed and downs and support for the University's reporting persons selling drugs other than marijuana (item 20). Finally, agreement to going to the University Counseling Center for drug counseling correlated highest with support for a drug counseling service for students and student government funding of a drug counseling center.

References

Fort, J. The drug explosion. Playboy, 1972, 19(9), 139ff.

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Table 1

Incidence of Drug Use by Year of Poll*

	Marijuana	Hashish	Speed	Downs	Mesc.	LSD	DMT	Cocaine	Heroin	Beer	Wine	Liq.	Cig.
1971-72	41%	30%	15%	---	11%	10%	5%	3%	1%	---	---	---	---
1972-73	47%	34%	15%	16%	12%	9%	4%	6%	2%	85%	90%	75%	60%

*Incidence = have ever used.

--- = no data available.

Table 2

Incidence of Drug Use by Year of Poll and Sex

1971-72(M)	44%	31%	17%	---	13%	15%	7%	4%	2%	---	---	---	---
(F)	37%	29%	14%	---	19%	7%	3%	3%	1%	---	---	---	---
1972-73(M)	54%	40%	18%	18%	15%	13%	6%	7%	3%	91%	91%	81%	58%
(F)	38%	25%	12%	13%	8%	5%	3%	3%	1%	81%	88%	69%	62%

Table 3

Reasons for Non Use of Drugs*

Item	Rank on 1971-72 Poll	Rank on 1972-73 Poll
Reports (or experiences) of harmful psychological effects	2	2
Reports (or experiences) of harmful physical effects	4	5
Observations of effects on others	3	3
Urging or potential disapproval from parents, friends, etc.	7	7
Illegality	5	4
Difficulty in obtaining substance	8	8
No desire to experience its effects	1	1
Afraid of becoming addicted	6	6

*Ranks: 1 = most frequent reason to 8 = least frequent reason

Table 4

Reasons for Use of Drugs*

Item	Rank on 1971-72 Poll	Rank on 1972-73 Poll
Explore inner self	6	7
For religious or mystical feeling	12	10
Relieve boredom	3	4
Feel less depressed or sad	8	10
Relieve general anxiwty, tension, nervousness, and/or irritability	4	3
Shut things out of my mind	9.5	13
Prepare for stress	11	13
Experience things more vividly	2	5
Make a good mood last longer or make a fine feeling better	5	6
To be more friendly, enhance sociability and/or be more loving	7	2
To be like others I admire	13.5	13
Go along with what others are doing	9.5	8
Enjoy doing something illegal or "forbidden"	13.5	10
Get high, feel good	1	1

*Ranks: 1 = most frequent reason to 14 = least frequent reason

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for 15 Attitudinal Items

No.	Item	1971-72 Poll Mean*	1971-72 Poll S.D.	1972-73 Poll Mean	1972-73 Poll S.D.
8	Marijuana should be legalized.	2.79**	1.28	2.44	1.31
9	All drugs should be legalized.	4.56	.76	4.53	.79
10	If I were aware of someone USING MARIJUANA I would report them to the proper authorities.	4.29	.88	4.35	.83
11	If I were aware of someone USING OTHER DRUGS I would report them to the proper authorities.	4.00	1.04	4.01	1.03
12	If I were aware of someone SELLING MARIJUANA I would report them to the proper authorities.	3.73	1.26	3.71	1.30
13	If I were aware of someone SELLING OTHER DRUGS I would report them to the proper authorities.	3.32	1.39	3.23	1.33
14	I would NOT attend a drug education program on campus.	3.52**	1.31	3.30	1.17
15	A drug counseling service should be provided for students.	1.63	.81	1.58	.81
16	The Student Government Association should fund a drug counseling center.	2.10	.96	2.24	1.04
17	I DO NOT feel sorry for people on drugs.	3.31	1.20	3.37	1.21
18	If the University has knowledge of a student USING MARIJUANA they should turn him over to the proper authorities.	3.84	1.10	3.92	1.11
19	If the University has knowledge of a student USING OTHER DRUGS they should turn him over to the proper authorities.	3.42	1.21	3.38	1.25

No.	Item	1971-72 Poll Mean*	1971-72 Poll S.D.	1972-73 Poll Mean	1972-73 Poll S.D.
20	If the University has knowledge of a student SELLING MARIJUANA they should turn him over to the proper authorities.	3.16	1.36	3.20	1.38
21	If the University has knowledge of a student SELLING OTHER DRUGS they should turn him over to the proper authorities.	2.64	1.30	2.52	1.34
22	If I were using drugs and felt a need for counseling, I would go to the University Counseling Center.	2.23**	1.00	2.08	.97

* 1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree.

** Difference between 2 polls significant beyond .05 level.